

Message Text

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TAGS: ELAB PINT PO

SUBJ: COUNCIL OF MINISTERS APPROVES UNITARY LABOR LAW

REFS: LISBON 327, 293, 242, 209, 189

SUMMARY: THE UNITARY LABOR LAW IS APPROVED IN GENERAL TERMS
BUT IT MUST STILL PASS THROUGH SEVERAL MORE PROCEDURAL STEPS
BEFORE PROMULGATION. END SUMMARY.

1. THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS HAS APPROVED "IN GENERAL", THE
PROPOSED DECREE-LAW WHICH WILL CREATE A UNITARY LABOR MOVEMENT
IN PORTUGAL. THIS DECISION WAS TAKEN JANUARY 20 FOLLOWING
FURTHER PROLONGED DISCUSSION. BEFORE RECEIVING FINAL
APPROVAL BY THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, THE PROPOSED LAW STILL
MUST BE CONSIDERED SECTION BY SECTION; BUT THE GENERAL TERMS,
INCLUDING LABOR UNITY, ARE DECIDED. PROMULGATION OF THE LAW
WILL OCCUR ONLY AFTER APPROVAL BY THE COUNCIL OF STATE WHICH
ALSO MAY MAKE CHANGES. IT IS CONSIDERED PROBABLE THAT FINAL TEXT
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OF LAW WILL INCLUDE A PROVISION FOR THE AUTOMATIC REVIEW OF THE

LAW AFTER ONE YEAR.

2. THE INCREASINGLY SHARP DEBATE ON THE PROPOSED LAW HAS FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE APRIL 25 REVOLUTION MADE THE PORTUGUESE PUBLIC FOCUS ON AN ISSUE INVOLVING CIVIL LIBERTIES. ATTACKS ON THE COMMUNIST PARTY, PREVIOUSLY NOTICEABLE CHIEFLY BY THEIR ABSENCE, ARE INCREASINGLY FREQUENT AND POLITICALLY ACCEPTABLE NOW THAT THE FACADE OF THE GOVERNING COALITION'S UNITY HAS CRACKED. MOST REMARKABLE IN THIS RESPECT IS THE HEATED AND STILL CONTINUING EXCHANGE OF PRESS STATEMENTS BETWEEN SOCIALIST MINISTER OF JUSTICE SALGADO ZENHA AND MINISTER OF LABOR COSTA MARTINS. THE LATEST, ISSUED BY COSTA MARTINS JANUARY 20, ASKS, AMID EXCLAMATION MARKS, WHY THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE IS INTERVENING IN AN ISSUE OUTSIDE HIS PURVIEW WHEN THE WORKERS HAVE ALREADY CLEARLY EXPRESSED THEIR WILL. SALGADO ZENHA, FOR HIS PART, IS REPORTED BY THE PRESS TO HAVE STATED FOLLOWING THE DECISIVE COUNCIL MEETING THAT HE DOES NOT HAVE "ANY PESSIMISTIC OR TRAGIC FEELINGS" ABOUT THE OUTCOME. SALGADO ZENHA APPARENTLY WILL NOT RESIGN OVER THE ISSUE AT THIS TIME AS HAD ONCE SEEMED POSSIBLE. ALSO, IT NOW APPEARS THAT NEITHER THE SOCIALISTS NOR THE PPD ARE LIKELY TO LEAVE THE GOVERNING COALITION AS THEY HAD AT ONE TIME THREATENED TO DO IF THE UNITARY LABOR LAW WAS PASSED. CARLUCC

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